



ALL OUR KIN INC

A SAFE AND LOVING PLACE WHERE PARENTS AND CHILDREN CAN LEARN

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**Testimony of Christina Nelson
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Before the Appropriations Committee
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Good evening, Senator Bye, Representative Walker, and the esteemed members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Christina Nelson, and I am an Early Childhood Policy Fellow at All Our Kin. We are a nationally-recognized, Connecticut-based nonprofit that trains, supports, and sustains community child care providers to ensure that children and families have the foundation they need to succeed in school and in life. Through our programs, child care providers succeed as small business owners; working parents find stable, high-quality care for their children; and children gain an educational foundation that lays the groundwork for achievement in school and beyond. I am here this evening to urge the committee to preserve funding for the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women's critical work in our state.

Women play a key role as leaders across our state. As we see daily at All Our Kin, women play an especially significant role in low-income areas, where they are powerful resources for their neighborhoods and communities. The job of caring for and educating our children often falls on women, be they informal caregivers, licensed child care providers, or a child's mother, grandmother, or family members. We work with women who have stepped up to this task with incredible grace and dedication, and we see firsthand how vital their well-being – financial, emotional, mental, and physical – is to the conditions in which our state's children live, learn, and grow. The PCSW's work enables women to thrive by ensuring they have equal opportunity to earn meaningful wages, access to necessary health services, and are not subject to discrimination. Supporting their work means supporting children, communities, and in turn, the future of our state.

Despite the many ways in which women are active in society – as workers, mothers, caregivers, leaders – women remain tragically undervalued. To quote the PCSW, “women are the only majority (51% of the population) consistently treated as a minority.” All Our Kin emerged as an organization from the realization that working, single mothers were doubly burdened with marginalization in the workforce and finding safe, quality child care that they could afford. Our founders Jessica Sager and Janna Wagner quickly learned that the difficult work of caring for children – as a licensed provider and as an informal caregiver – is not valued, supported, or compensated as it needs to be. This reality is alarming. If a woman is denied the health care she needs, or cannot obtain a job with adequate wages, or cannot keep a job because of insufficient child care options, it is not only she who is disenfranchised, but also the children in her care who will lack the strong foundation they need for a lifetime of success. The PCSW's efforts to provide

information, research and analysis regarding these issues and others is vital for the future and integrity of our state.

At All Our Kin, we work to ensure that women's caregiving work is visible and valued; that mothers have viable, safe, quality child care options; and that child care providers receive the support that they need in order to provide quality care to children. But we cannot do this alone. By focusing on the three priority areas of economic and financial security, health and safety, and the elimination of gender discrimination, the PCSW plays a critical role in ensuring that all Connecticut's women and girls are poised to succeed. I cannot overemphasize how much the work of this group means to all of us at All Our Kin.

We fully understand the realities of this year's budget, and we know that your task on the Appropriations Committee is a challenging one. However, we urge you to bear in mind that the work of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women is critical to the lives of the hundreds of family child care providers that All Our Kin supports, as well as the working mothers of the children they care for and the children themselves.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.